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SUBJECT: Peru Environment Minister Lists Priority Concerns and Hopes for Collaboration

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On November 2, Post's ESTH bilateral and regional teams met Environment Minister Antonio Brack, to formally introduce the new ESTH Officer for Peru and the ESTH Hub Officer for South America, as well as to discuss priority environmental issues for Peru and the Region. We engaged in a friendly and candid discussion with this minister who this summer survived a major cabinet change. He provided us with his views on environmental concerns, his goals for improving environmental policy in Peru, and a more precise viewpoint on genetically modified organisms than he usually articulates in the press. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Ministry of Environment (MINAM) officials included Antonio Brack Egg, Minister of Environment, Patricia Fernandez Davila, Head of Advisors of the Ministry of Environment and Julio Oca????a, Advisor of the Ministry of Environment.

Peru's Key Environmental Issues

¶3. (U) Brack was asked to identify the key environmental issues facing Peru. He replied with the following:

¶A. Liquid waste management, which he described as the main cause of contamination in Peru.

¶B. Solid waste management was of approximately equal concern. Brack noted that only 17% of solid waste is currently being processed.

¶C. Air contamination in large cities such as Lima. Brack mentioned that beginning Jan 2010, sulfur content in diesel will be reduced from the current 5,000 parts per million (PPM) to 50 PPM for the Lima and Callao areas. (COMMENT - Diesel fuel containing 5,000 PPM of sulfur will still be permitted in other Peruvian regions. This will probably result in Lima and Callao air quality not reducing to desired levels, given the significant transportation links between Lima and other parts of Peru. A progressive timeline for sulfur reduction for the remainder of the regions in Peru must still be developed by the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) - END COMMENT.) He added that in 2010, the GOP would establish a program to purchase and destroy old cars that pollute excessively; seeking to replace them with new natural gas units. He noted that 192 million Nuevo soles (US\$66 million) has already been assigned for implementation of the program.

¶D. Mining and its profound environmental impact.

¶E. Protect the Amazon and combatting illegal logging. Brack mentioned the commencement of Peru's National Forestry Program, begun last year to conserve Peru's 67 million hectares (258,000 square miles) of virgin forests, with technical support from Germany as well as an initial loan from Japan for \$90 million for implementation. Brack expressed hope that the United Nations Collaborative Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) may also be utilized to reduce poverty and increase development for the Amazon

indigenous communities through forest conservation activities.

REDD and Adaptation Fund - Priorities for the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference

¶4. (U) On the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference scheduled to take place December 7-15, Brack said that the priorities for MINAM are REDD and the adaptation fund. Brack added that if these can not be resolved in Copenhagen, Peru would support the Global Environment Fund (GEF) in the next relevant meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay in May 2010.

Desires Replication of National Park Service Modalities

¶5. (U) Brack mentioned that he is particularly interested in training programs that may be available from the USG, and emphasized his esteem of our well organized system of national park rangers. He expressed interest in establishing similar the same organizational principles that rule the US park ranger system to management of Peru's 16 million hectares (62,000 square miles) of forests within Natural Protected Areas. He looks forward to any capacity training opportunities available from the National Park Service and the US Forestry Service that would serve in attaining the goals of protecting forests and managing protected areas.

Ecological Police - Budgetary Constraints and Combating Urban Crime Prevent Development of Specialization

¶6. (U) Minister Brack spoke about Peru's National Police Direction of Ecology and Tourism (their "Ecological Police"). One of the principal weaknesses in Peru's current Ecological Police program, Brack noted, is its frequent rotation of officers. Any training provided on environmental issues to this group is lost as they are assigned to other positions/tasks. Brack said that the GOP is seeking to create an environmental specialty within the police force. But budgetary constraints currently prevent this improvement.

¶7. (U) Minister Brack noted that Peru staffs only 250 ecological police positions. For a country with 66 million hectares (258,000 square miles) of forests, he believes this number is far too small. He added that the Government of Peru is considering increasing this group to 3,000. Yet again, budgetary constraints are a concern. The US-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) is still viewed as a means of increasing priority for expanding this force to combat illegal logging. (Comment: Econoff spoke with a current environmental police member, and learned that the number of environmental police has declined recently, as the GOP has placed more emphasis on urban security. End Comment.)

Recruit the Navy for Forestry Enforcement; Number of Environmental Prosecutors Rising

¶8. (U) Brack noted that the Navy plays a key role in combating illegal logging, as the Navy is responsible for navigable waters within Peru.

¶9. (U) Brack commended the work of Peru's 46 environmental prosecutors. He noted in particular the work performed by the environmental prosecutor of the Loreto Region pertaining to illegal logging.

Regional Environmental Collaboration

¶10. (U) In terms of regional integration, Minister Brack said that Peru has excellent relationships with Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil. Brack described Inambari (the \$4 billion hydro dam project to be developed in the Peruvian Amazon), as "clean energy" with the added benefit of possibly creating energy exports for Peru. Brack noted that the area of impact that was originally more than 40,000 hectares has been reduced to 20,000 hectares and that the area flooded will promote the creation of new aquifers and biodiversity. (Comment: This was an interesting change of opinion for Minister Brack on Inambari, as he expressed opposition to this project several months ago when pushing for the creation of a green fund on taxes imposed on this project to provide for environmental remediation work on the areas of impact of the project, including

the displacement of some communities in the area. However, he may be taking a pragmatic stance on this project, since he added that the project was going to move forward regardless of his views as it was promoted directly by the President. End Comment.)

Not universally opposed to importation of some Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

¶11. (U) Minister Brack, who generally is viewed as an opponent of GMOs in Peru, provided a more detailed explanation, including how he does not oppose GMO use in certain crops. He noted Peru's biodiversity and described his country as the "cradle" of particular crops that must be protected from invasion. In particular, he objected to the introduction of GMOs in potatoes, corn and cotton, citing as an example that Peru has 2321 varieties of potatoes. He added that Peru's growing organic market (over \$1 billion in exports) must also be protected from incursion of GMOs. However, he did not oppose importation of certain crops not native to Peru, citing mangoes in particular. He expressed his support for the decision of Peru's president to form a high level technical/scientific team to review and develop biosecurity regulations pertaining to GMOs.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: Brack, who is regularly welcoming in public events, continued to conduct himself in a private meeting with the same upbeat attitude. It was clear that he seeks to engage with those who can provide assistance to meet Peru's daunting environmental challenges in the face of climate change, increased demand for mining and ever increasing illegal logging in the Amazon.

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